



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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June 20, 1967

TO : ALL NAACP UNITS AND NEWS MEDIA
FROM : PHILLIP H. SAVAGE
TRI-STATE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: T-O-P-S---Teenagers' Organization for a Productive Summer

We urge that each NAACP adult branch and/or Youth Council organize a special unit called "TOPS"---Teenagers' Organization for a Productive Summer---to work in the fields of employment, housing, recreation and other areas preventing problems that create community unrest and disorder. Also, the members of this unit would be used by the NAACP to ease racial tension and to bring outbreaks of racial violence quickly under control, as was done recently in Tampa, Florida.

In order to organize a "TOPS" unit, we suggest that the following steps be followed:

- a. Appoint or select an adult advisor or director who will recruit other adult supervisors to help with the program.
- b. Issue a public statement to the news media, announcing that the formation of such a group is being planned and that teenage volunteers are urged to join.
- c. Find a meeting place for "TOPS." It could be a small vacant store or a vacant house in a slum area. Or a basement of a church or of someone's house. Or a room in a public building.
- d. At the first meeting of the group, select temporary officers. Since this is a special unit, you may explore the wisdom of using ranks, such as corporals, sergeants, adjutant captains and generals, for the various youth participants. For example, the youth leader of the unit would be General _____; the second in command could be Captain _____; the individual who maintains the records---who would normally be called the secretary---would be given the title of Adjutant _____; and the individual in charge of about ten (10) or fifteen recruits could be called the Sergeant. All youth members would be designated as corporals.
- e. Hold a meeting of "TOPS" each week until school re-opens. The content of the meeting would deal with various subjects: recreation, human relations, police, employment, etc. At each meeting, an expert in each of the areas of concern would discuss with the group problems relating to them.

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f. Contact your police department and public officials--- especially the mayor---for their help and co-operation. Request the police commissioner to notify the adult director whenever potential racial outbursts might occur, to instruct his policemen to work with TOPS' members at the scene(s) of such disorders, and to assign top police officials to lecture at meetings of "TOPS" on subjects relating to police actions---riot control, training of policemen, apprehension of lawbreakers, etc.

g. Solicit donations to purchase identifying helmets and sweatshirts for TOPS' members. We suggest that the helmets be black with a broad white fluorescent stripe painted down the middle of them; and that the sweatshirts be black with large white letters, "TOPS", sewed on the front and back of them. The helmets and/or sweatshirts also would have the insignia of the rank held by the wearers painted or sewed on them. Local businesses, industries and foundations in your area are good sources for donations for this particular project.

h. Devise a plan for mobilizing the unit in case of an emergency situation. Special code words---such as "RED ALERT"---and the place where the members should assemble, would be telephoned to each member by designated "corporals."

i. Organize a plan of action to be used at the scene where disorder might occur or is occurring. For example, plan in advance the dispersal of teams of TOPS' members---3 or 4 to a team---to certain portions of the tension area to encourage residents not to engage in mob actions and to refute rumors which circulate during the height of such situations.

j. Promote a jamboree or some other type of social function to give recognition to those who have participated in this special project. Such an event should take place before the re-opening of school. Participants could be awarded plaques, certificates, or trophies, and some of them could be "promoted" to higher ranks at this closing affair.

k. Keep the group together during the fall and winter seasons, in case of an emergency need for their specialized services.

We have offered above broad recommendations. You may modify our directive to suit your local needs and requirements. Whatever you do, let us know about it. It is important that our organization give some positive leadership and effort in this area, because we all stand to lose if bricks and bottles are thrown...and our innocent men, women and children continue to be incited, injured and jailed...as a result of the reckless and irresponsible actions and words of a few.

We want to hear from you about your local efforts. Please write to us:

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